

PRESS RELEASE

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Madison, Wisconsin -- Erik C. Peterson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Amanda Ferch, 37, Brooklyn, and Randy Ruth, 37, Madison, both pleaded guilty yesterday in U.S. District Court in Madison. Both defendants pleaded guilty to conspiracy to embezzle money from Dane County Title Company through the use of forged company checks.

On August 6, 2008, a federal grand jury in Madison returned an eleven-count indictment against Ferch and Ruth. Count One charged a conspiracy against both defendants. According to the indictment, Ferch worked at Dane County Title in the bookkeeping department from 2000 to June 20, 2008, and eventually became the accounting supervisor. Ferch used her position to forge the signature on company checks made payable either to herself or to Ruth.

At yesterday's plea hearing, the government presented evidence that Ferch created false entries in the company's general ledger in order to conceal her embezzlement scheme. She also intercepted the cancelled checks that were mailed from the bank to the company, and culled out the forged checks from the bank statements in a further attempt to conceal her activities. According to the government, Ferch

confessed to Madison Police detectives and cooperated in the investigation. Ferch explained that she made the checks payable to herself as well as to Ruth. Ruth cashed his checks and deposited the funds into his personal bank account. Then, Ruth would write checks back to Ferch in an effort to cycle the money back to her.

Ferch told the police that she and Ruth were each smoking \$400 a day of crack cocaine and that most of the stolen funds were used to purchase crack cocaine. Some of the money was also used to pay bills and for gambling at Ho-Chunk. According to Madison police, the scheme lasted from December 2005 to July 1, 2008, and involved 139 forged checks totaling \$478,614.

Senior U.S. District Judge James T. Moody, from the Northern District of Indiana, took the pleas but did not set a sentencing date. Both defendants face a maximum statutory penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

The charges against both defendants were the result of an investigation conducted by the Madison Police Department. The prosecution of the case has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel J. Graber.

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